

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 2961

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, CI

SUBJ: NEW JUSTICE MINISTER; HUMAN RIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: DURING AMBASSADOR'S CALL APRIL 25, NEW JUSTICE MINISTE SAID NEW LEGISLATION ON NATIONAL SECURITY WOULD BE OUT SOON. IF GOC INTENDS TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION IN INTERNAL SECURITY/HUMAN RIGHTS AREA, THE MOMENT IS OPPORTUNE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN FIRST CALL ON NEW CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT MINISTERS RECENTLY APPOINTED, AMBASSADOR CALLED APRIL 25 ON JUSTICE MINISTER MIGUEL SCHWEITZER. MINISTER SAID HIS NOMINATION HAD BEEN A COMPLETE SURPRISE, COMMUNICATED TO HIM ONLY ONE DAY BEFORE FORMATION OF NEW CABINET. SAID HE HAD NEVER BEEN POLITICALLY COMMITTED BUT HAD "CLEAR IDEAS." NOTED HE HAD BEEN MEMBER OF CHILEAN DELEGATION OF OBSERVERS TO RECENT GENEVA MEETING OF UNHRC AND THE THIS DIPLOMATIC EXPOSURE, HIS FIRST, HAD BEEN VERY VALUABLE. IT SHOWED HIM THE PROBLEM CHILE HAS WITH ITS IMAGE ABROAD, AND CONVINCED HIM OF NEED TO TAKE STEPS WITHIN THE COUNTRY TO IMPROVE THE IMAGE.

3. SCHWEITZER RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY TO AMBASSADOR'S GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON US INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CHILE, CONFIDENTIAL

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DESIRE TO HELP CHILE, AND NEED FOR GOC TO HELP US DO SO. HE

SAID THAT NEW "TRANSITORY" DECREEE LAW ON NATIONAL SECURITY, PLUS OTHER MEASURES, WOULD BE OUT SHORTLY, AND HE HOPED TO BE ABLE TOMAKE AN IMPRINT IN THIS GENERAL AREA.

4. COMMENT: ON ASSUMING OFFICE SCHWEITZER TOLD PRESS GOC STILL EXPECTS TO ISSUE TRANSITORY DECREEE LAW, PENDING DRAFTING AND PROMULGATION OF COMPLETE NATIONAL SECURITY CODE, AND THAT DRAFT OF DECREE WAS "NOW IN HANDS OF PRESIDENT." ORIGINAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF A "TEMPORARY" LAW ON SECURITY AFFAIRS WAS MADE BY PRESIDENT PINOCHET IN LATE JANUARY, WHEN HE OPINED IT WOULD GO INTO EFFECT "IN 30 DAYS" (SANTIAGO 645).

5. IMPORTANCE OF NEW INTERNAL SECURITY LEGISLATION IS THAT GOC LEADERS, INCONVERSATIONS WITH US AND WITH OTHERS, HAVE CONVEYED IMPRESSION THAT ADOPTION OF AN UP-TO-DATE, EFFECTIVE LAW WOULD BRING ABOUT IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA. IMPLICATION IS THAT ONCE LEGISLATION IS IN FORCE, STATE OF SIEGE MIGHT BE MODIFIED, CIVIL COURTS ASSUME GREATER ROLE, AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS BE MADE. CANCELLATION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER'S VISIT REMOVED ON INCENTIVE FOR GOC TO MOVE QUICKLY, BUT OTHER REMAIN, PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC AREA. NEVERTHELESS, GOVERNMENT CONSIDERATION OF MATTER HAS ALREADY TAKEN AN INORDINATE TIME.

- INSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE OF JUSTICE MINISTER IN SECURITY/HUMAN RIGHTS SPHERE IS LIMITED, AND OBVIOUSLY SCHWEITZER MUST WORK WITHIN LIMITS SET BY OVERALL GOC POLICY AND ATTITUDES. HIS APPOINTMENT IS BEING INTERPRETED AS SIGN GOC INTENDS TO DO SOMETHING, HOWEVER, AND THERE IS SPECULATION HE CONDITIONED ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT ON THIS. HE HIMSELF QUITE PROPERLY IS VERY CAREFUL IN WHAT HE SAYS. WITH CABINET CHANGE AND NEW ECONOMIC STRATEGY NOW OUT OF THE WAY, HOWEVER, HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD LOGICALLY BECOME A HIGH PRIORITY MATTER FOR GOC.
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